taken as a whole, the invention makes over the prior art. Moreover, Groups I and II are classified under the same class (Class 131) and same subclass (299).

The Applicant respectfully reminds the Examiner that the MPEP in § 803 states as follows:

> "If the search and examination of an entire application can be made without a serious burden, the Examiner must examine it on the merits, even though it includes claims to distinct or independent inventions."

Applicant respectfully submits that a search of all the claims would not impose a serious burden on the Office because they all relate to the same article, namely tobacco and the curing thereof. Applicant's assertions are further supported by the fact that Groups I and II are classified in the same class and subclass.

In view of the above, Applicant respectfully submits that the present Restriction Requirement is improper, and that the Restriction Requirement be withdrawn.

Applicant believes that Claims 1-58 are distinguishable over the prior art cited by the Examiner.

Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner indicate that Claims 15-57 have been entered. Applicant had filed on March 20, 2002 a Supplemental Amendment. Applicant has not received confirmation that such claims have been entered. For the convenience of the Examiner, a copy is submitted herewith. Applicant requests that all claims be examined together.

Any questions that the Examiner may have regarding this correspondence can be directed to the undersigned who may be reached at (919) 854-1400.

Respectfully submitted,

F. Michael Sajovec
Registration No. 31,793

20792
PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, Washington, DC 20231, on August 20, 2002.

Clara R. Beard